

**APPROVED 10/08/2008**

Present: Budget Committee members Charles Kimball, Mike Nygren, Andy Kohlhofer, Rich Violette, Doug McElroy, School Board Representative Peg Pinkham (7:15 pm); and Town Administrator Heidi Carlson

The meeting came to order at 7:05 pm.

Board members reviewed the minutes of September 24, 2008. McElroy asked that item 9 on page two be amended to reflect that the question was relative to the 2007-2008 school year and where had the office rent been transferred from, as it had not been included in the initial budget. McElroy then moved to approve the minutes as amended. Nygren seconded. The vote was approved 4-0-1 with Kohlhofer abstaining as he wasn't present.

There was discussion that the Board Selectmen and Budget Committee votes (actual record of the vote count) are supposed to be shown in the warrant. Carlson said she would look further in to this, as she had never heard this as a requirement.

Peg Pinkham arrived at 7:15 pm.

Carlson then presented the Town's overall Insurance budget:

**4196 INSURANCE****001 Property Liability****\$35,100**

All property-liability & public officials liability insurance. Vehicle schedule: approx \$500 per vehicle - 3 police cruisers; 1 police SUV; 1 rescue truck; 1 EM vehicle; Fire Tank 1 (army 6x6); Tank 5 (Mack tanker converted); Forestry 1; Engine 1; Fire Utility Truck 2005; Highway 2005 one ton truck. AT \$1000 per actual fire truck: E1, E3, T4. Town has signed up for a multi-year rate program which results in stable rates for another 2 years (excluding new coverages); fine arts coverage on hearse and hand tub \$100. Estimated 5% increase based on added coverages and predicted max rate increases as part of multi-year agreement.

**002 Police Liability****\$ 525**

Additional insurance for the Police Department; increased based on premium cost in 2008; anticipated inflation.

**010 Deductible****\$ 1,000**

Deductible on property-liability insurance

**TOTAL REQUEST \$ 36,625**

Carlson further explained that this covers all property and liability insurances. Violette questioned if this is bid out; and there ensued discussion about getting proposals from other companies, and Carlson provided some rationale for remaining with one of the two big municipal carriers in New Hampshire. LGC is probably the single largest municipal insurer; and covers many of the 234 towns and cities in NH in self-funded pool insurance. Primex (the other large municipal carrier) does the Town's workers compensation insurance (shown under Employee Benefits – 4155); and Carlson felt there was a big advantage to having some coverages with each of these two companies because it offered a great deal of training and other resource opportunities.

Signing on to multi-year agreements with both companies for the respective coverage provides some discounts; and the only way to get larger discounts would be to have all insurances covered by one; and neither can touch the price we get directly from Anthem for health insurance coverage. Carlson explained that we had a portion of the NH LGC Health Trust coverage in Life, ST and LT Disability; but that we do better outside their plan for health.

Nygren said that it is an 11% increase from what was appropriated last year. The 2008 PLT coverage had been overspent due to added coverages, or larger than expected municipal expenses, which is a formula portion of the cost.

#### **4442 DIRECT ASSISTANCE**

Carlson explained that the Assistance budgeted is based on for 22 cases at an average of \$750-900 per case totaling \$19,500 in direct assistance payments. Funds include all statutory payments for housing, food, medical, fuel, and utilities.

An additional \$500 is budgeted for administration. Administrative funds cover the cost of the Welfare Director's annual membership in the NH Local Welfare Administrator's Association (\$30); monthly training meetings (attend maybe 3-4 annual depending on scheduling); minor office supply expenses such as paper, stamps, and file folders. This line also covers mileage as needed to training or home visits if necessary.

An additional \$300 is budgeted under Case 50, which is used to have small food gift cards on hand (charged back to a particular case as applicable); for emergency situations for walk-ins. We generally keep 4-5 of these on hand in the amount of \$20 to supplement the Food Pantry items, which are virtually all non-perishables.

A new line in 2008, #060 for Oil has been added to the budget for 2009; and some other funds were reallocated there in 2008. The Town was fortunate to pre-buy some gallons with the Town's contract at \$2.99 per gallon. Without that, the Town may pay the current rate of \$4.00 to \$4.59 when using the client's usual vendor. Including this in the Town's bid pricing has been done for several years, but in 2008 we had an opportunity to pre-pay for half the gallon cost, and the balance would be charged out to each case as it is used. This will hopefully help with the fuel price crunch that we have already started to see effects from. For 2009, \$4,000 is being included in this line in hopes of doing a similar program, to pre-buy, or have availability to earmark gallons within the Town's contract at a lower per gallon price.

Currently, the cost of heating fuel has been lower than \$4.00 per gallon, and the pre-paid fuel for 2008 (\$1,200) will be used whenever possible. It is often cheaper to use the Town's fuel vendor than the individuals usual vendor; and problems do arise with past due balances and such if someone has been struggling for a period of time with fuel costs.

Given economic predictions and current status of cases, this budget is hoped to be sufficient. The Town is obligated by statute to provide assistance to the needy. If the welfare budget in any given year was not sufficient to meet the statutory obligations, it would have to be taken from another line item. (You can not refuse to pay statutory welfare expenses because you "don't have any budget money left.")

Reductions in social service programs continue, including fuel assistance, currently used by many Fremont clients. We work hard with the outside social service agencies to help reduce the local burden, as well as get as much assistance to those in need as is eligible.

Fuel Assistance began taking applications September 1, 2008; two full months earlier than normal, but grants do not become available until after December 1<sup>st</sup>. Heating needs prior to grant funds available have already become town expenses when there are no other alternative resources available. We have already started to see requests for heating fuel as it gets cooler; and people wait for their grant. Fuel Assistance grants, for the most part, have not increased, and the average \$500 grant will now not even purchase one tank full of fuel oil.

**TOTAL REQUEST \$24,300**

Carlson then moved on to the Election and Registration budget. This had been prepared by Supervisor Neal Janvrin and town Clerk Lori Holmes; and presented to the Selectmen about two weeks ago. Carlson indicated the budget was small for 2009 as compared to 2008 with the large general election and two primaries. If there are additional questions, the Supervisors and/or Town Clerk will be asked to come in for some follow-up.

#### **4140 ELECTION AND REGISTRATION**

##### **001 Supervisors**

**\$ 1,957**

1 election x 3 supervisors (39 hrs); 2 checklist correction sessions (required by state law) x 1 hr per session x 3 supervisors (6 hrs); 1 meeting a month (required by Secretary of State) for approval of names to be added / removed from checklist, letters mailed to voters and to other supervisors etc... x 1 hr each meeting x 3 supervisors (36 hrs); scanning of voters & required paperwork to be filed with SOS office after an election at 5 hrs x 3 supervisors (15 hrs); Town deliberative session @ 4 hours x 3 supervisors (12 hrs); monthly data entry of new voter registrations, changes on voter registrations (48 hrs); printing checklists as needed and requested (10 hrs); 2 training sessions at 4 hours x 3 (24 hrs) Budgeted 190 hrs at \$10.30 per hour

##### **002 Ballot Clerks & Election Workers**

**\$ 536**

1 election x 4 clerks x \$134/day. Polling hours changed from 11 hours to 13 hours

##### **007 Moderator**

**\$ 384**

Annual salary of \$250 plus \$134 per day for 1 election.

##### **008 Ballots / Supplies / Postage**

**\$ 650**

Purchase of ballots and programming of memory card for voting machine for Town election. Mailing costs (absentee ballots) and paper for checklist requests.

##### **009 Meals Election Officials**

**\$ 300**

One election x \$300

##### **010 Computer Supplies**

**\$ 325**

Printer ribbons and general supplies. This includes the annual maintenance contract on the voting machine.

##### **035 Dues / Conferences & Mileage**

**\$ 200**

Annual workshop and mileage for Moderator and Assistant Moderator. Mileage for the Supervisors for attending training / workshops as needed/required by the State.

##### **100 New Equipment**

**\$ 250**

New Signage needed at polling place.

**TOTAL REQUEST \$ 4,602**

Carlson explained that the hours for polling will increase in 2009 to open at 7:00 am and close at 8:00 pm; adding two hours to the day for a total of 13 hours. Day rates for election officials have been adjusted for that, using \$10.30 per hour as a multiplier.

Carlson advised that Janvrin and Holmes had been in to see the Selectmen and also discussed rationale for having the November General Election at the Complex instead of the School, which had been previously arranged. The election officials indicated that they have re-worked the necessary space with the Fire Chief, and that the School does not have a dedicated phone line that can be used for the handicap accessible machine/booth that is required by law. The Town would have to pay that cost, as the State of NH will not install a line there for November. Given all of this, the change was made to hold the election at the Safety Complex.

There were no further Election and Registration questions. This budget is down from \$11,715 in 2009 due to a lesser number of elections than 2008.

Carlson had no additional budgets to present, and discussion turned to the wage study. Kohlhofer indicated that he had reviewed the pay matrix and does not feel that it is completely accurate either, and that it should compare productivity and not compare to other towns.

There was additional discussion about how the study was done and the information available for comparisons.

Nygren then moved on to a couple of additional questions that he said he had discussed with Carlson outside of the last meeting.

The first deals with the appropriation of \$1,000,000 for the purchase of open space land. He said this had been authorized in 2006 but included no specified timeframe or specific parcels of land. He said he has reviewed the statutes (RSA 32 and 33) on it and feels that it was over one year since the appropriation had been made that it would have lapsed if the Conservation Commission / Open Space Committee did not come to the Selectmen for an additional year or five years (which is the maximum he indicated is allowed by law).

His concern expressed is that the taxpayers cannot afford, in this economy. He suggested in a few years, maybe it would be different, and the tax base would have further expanded, but that it should not go ahead now.

Nygren said he believes it has lapsed and Kohlhofer agreed, also based on his review of statutes. Carlson said she had not yet done enough research, but as the discussion and questions continued, obtained RSA 32 and 33 to review them further.

Nygren said he felt the Board of Selectmen should notify the Conservation Commission that the time has passed prior to land coming forward that may not be able to be purchased legally. Discussion about this continued; and RSA 33:8-a and RSA 32:7 were reviewed and further discussed. Carlson asked if Nygren and Kohlhofer could provide some additional statute numbers for further research. Carlson explained that it had always been her understanding that a bond is authorized until rescinded, short of other language within the article. The 2006 warrant article wording was not consulted, but will be for further documentation as well.

There was discussion about getting legal opinions now, and the Town trying to save this money in the difficult economy. Pinkham then questioned if it was the Budget Committee's intent to override the will

of the people that had been at the 2006 Town Meeting, who made that vote. This led to further discussion of intent and the role of the Committee.

It was decided that Carlson would work on crafting a letter to get some legal advice from the Local Government Center at no cost; in that she was not going to authorize legal advice through Town Counsel without talking additionally with the Board of Selectmen.

The second item that Nygren said he had was questions on the warrant article in 2008 looking for the final wording on the amendment on the floor for the unmarked cruiser. The article amended the funding to the Capital Reserve Article by \$11,000 for the unmarked car; but put it in the CRF for a Police Cruiser; which Nygren said he believes was missed on the floor, and is not legal. He said he does not believe we are obligated to buy the unmarked car.

On the floor of the meeting, the appropriation was changed from \$12,500 to \$23,500; to fund half the cost in another year, of an unmarked car. Nygren said he believes there is a difference between a police cruiser and the unmarked car.

Nygren also stated that Chief Janvrin had pulled the article off the table and it never made it to the Budget Committee for review; and then it came up on the Town Meeting floor. Nygren said that bothered him.

Carlson said she had discussed this with the Selectmen and Chief Janvrin, and they believed that a police car is a police car, whether unmarked or not (ie: that all police cars can be termed "police cruisers.")

Discussion returned to the 2006 Warrant article for \$1,000,000 to purchase land. Kohlhofer said he had also done some research of the statutes and agreed with Nygren that it was no longer valid. Pinkham again questioned if they wanted to go against the will of the voters; and Kohlhofer said that he wanted to support the law as written.

Nygren further said that if the Conservation Commission had already borrowed the money and had not yet spent it, it would not bother him. Because they have not borrowed it yet, he feels it is not appropriate at this time. He said if the voters would pass it again in an economy where the Town realizes the costs, that would be fine.

Pinkham asked if the Budget Committee, as a group, wants to question the intent of the voters? There was discussion on how the vote occurred; but Nygren said he is not looking for a technicality; he believes there was no proper time element in the vote. McElroy said if that is the case, then we should know it before the borrowing moves ahead.

There was discussion about the date for the day time session on a Saturday to review the School Budget. Pinkham said that some school officials do not think that a full day is productive. December 6 and 20 were dates discussed for the Committee to meet, and they thought they may want to do a full day to go over school.

With no further business, Kohlhofer moved to adjourn the meeting 8:40 pm. Violette seconded and the vote was unanimously approved. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday October 8, 2008 at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Carlson, Town Administrator